

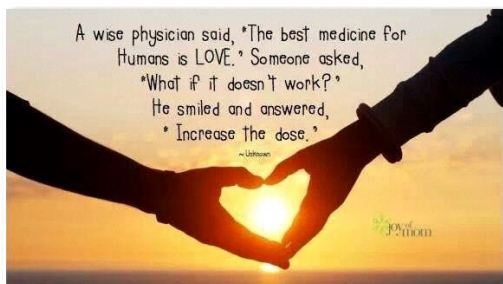
Teams Newsletter

for the GB Regions.
October- December 2021



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Regional Gatherings

Last chance to book:

[https://teamsgb.org.uk/2021 Gatherings Booking Form/](https://teamsgb.org.uk/2021%20Gatherings%20Booking%20Form/)

The Christian Couple, Leaven of Renewal for the Family and Society

Our theme is based around the Encyclical Laudato Si':
On Care for Our Common Home.

It invites us to celebrate God's world and reflect upon the ways in which we, as Christian Teams couples, renew and change this world in which we live.

Northern Region	25 September	Key-note Speaker: Fr. Eamonn Mulcahy
Southern Region	2 October	Key-note Speakers: Padraig and Ingrid, Teams Ireland
Central Region	9 October	Key-note Speakers: Bishop David Oakley and Fr Simon Penhaligon

Note from Editors

We have a bumper edition for you this quarter! For the next year we will include linked study topics and readings. We also have lots of articles and prayers that Teams members have found helpful along with news and a little history. However, you may have noticed that we're scraping the bottom of the photo barrel for the front cover and have resorted to a picture we found of ourselves enjoying a rare moment sitting down together!



Tell us about your team news

Send us a photo and a few lines about your team, any interesting study topics or news. Please send all photos & articles for the Jan- March 2022 edition to us by **30 November** to: editors@teamsgb.org.uk

Need more Newsletters?

For extra copies of this newsletter, contact Dympna & Mark at editors@teamsgb.org.uk. Contact your regional couple for any ongoing change in the number of newsletters you need or any address changes.

Regional Couple Letter

Dear friends in Teams,

During the past year, a group in our parish has been actively collecting money and donations for food banks, local and international projects, refugees, asylum seekers etc. The need for money and support both locally and globally is large but donations were smaller than hoped for. This led to talk from some people that the level of generosity was a reflection of others' commitment to the Christian life, suggesting 'proper Christians' would have seen and understood the needs of others and responded more generously with both time and money.



Our response to this was to look at what was happening around us at the moment. Lives have been turned upside down by the pandemic and jobs have been lost. Even those who were lucky to be on furlough were on reduced income. The fear generated by the pandemic was not only about the effect on our health but also about fear of economic effects.

Christ addressed this issue with the parable of the Widow's Mite (Mark 12:41-44). The widow gave all she possessed to the temple; compared to the rich people it was a tiny amount. The rich gave out of their excess. Christ valued the gift from the widow more than all of the others put together. It reminds us that we should not judge others on the practical or financial contributions they make in a materialistic or transactional way. We have no idea what is happening within their lives, what problems they face, what demands they have on them both now and in the future. Nor do we really know what they are contributing to the spiritual life of the community.

One of the joys of Teams is sharing with others about both our physical and spiritual lives. We share our joys and sorrows. Sometimes listening to sharing is heart breaking, at other times, a source of great pleasure and amusement. Sharing has taught us not judge by what is on the surface but to listen to what is in others' hearts giving us insights into their relationships with their spouses, families, communities and with God.

Sadly, this level of sharing and understanding others is not possible with everyone we meet. Yet the skills we develop by sharing and listening to others at a Teams meeting help us to look deeper into people's lives in order to listen. These skills enable us to try to understand them and not to judge them in the way our society would judge them but in the way Christ would judge them; with love and understanding.

Every blessing for the future.

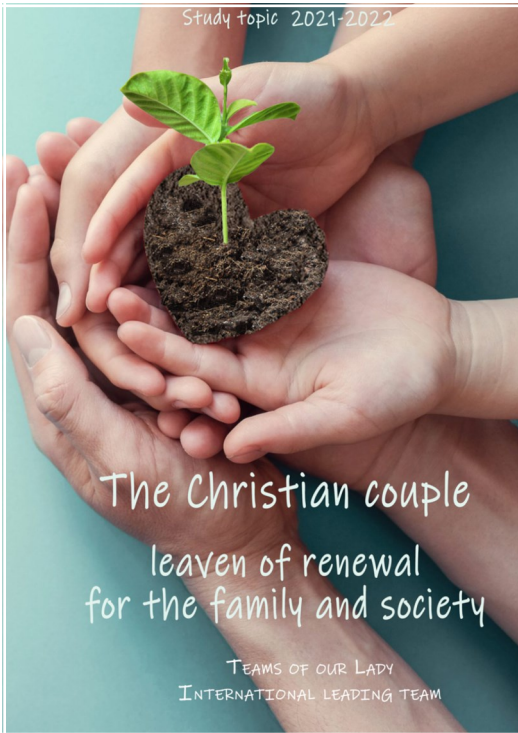
Sue & Paul Rowney

Regional Couple, Northern GB



Study Topic 2021-2 in Newsletter

Study topic 2021 “The Christian couple: leaven of renewal for family and society”



As we begin our new Teams year, we wish you a happy, healthy and fruitful year in your Team.

After much thought and discussion with Regional Couples we have decided to put in the newsletter each quarter the relevant parts of the Teams study topic for the coming year “The Christian couple leaven of renewal for family and society.”

This is an important issue and very relevant in our world today. Christian couples can act as leaven to raise up hope and joy, helping to generate respect for each other and our environment. We hope that you and your Team will be able to draw from Pope Francis’ document “Laudato Si” and documents written by our founder Fr Henri Caffarel, as well as the testimonies from Teams members.

You will find that the prayers and questions for couple preparation are presented for each month. The background reading from Laudato Si, from Fr Caffarel’s writings and

testimonies are presented separately as the study topic for your convenience.

We pray that you and your Team will be able to meet face to face after much time online and apart physically and that you will be inspired to be “leaven” in your communities.

May the Lord bless you in your Endeavours,

Annette and Paul O’Beirne

Transatlantic Superregional Couple



Website Update www.teamsgb.org.uk

A special thank you to all of you who have been so supportive and helped us get our website on track. This has helped us better meet your needs, and make information about Teams of Our Lady just a click away.

The website is a live invitation to current members to keep in touch by sharing their ideas, and to obtain access to information, literature and news. This is a complementary service that does not duplicate any other publication or social media site run by our many volunteers.



Critically it is not a replacement to the Newsletter, which is stored electronically on the website, and we try not to run the same articles. The printed version of the Newsletter provides a range of regular pieces and inspirational reflections about teams, and is our directory to contacts around GB that we are unable to share online.

For prospective members TeamsGB.org.uk provides a window into Teams. We have already had contacts from people who are interested in Teams and have ensured that our Regional Couples can respond by setting up contact through the website.

The site has to be attractive and relevant for interested couples, so we try to balance the spiritual and social side of Teams. It is a great way of showing people that members of Teams are ordinary people, all of whom are sharing their vocation of marriage, and family; and who are on a journey that binds us together and supports our faith.

To all our current members, we invite you to keep in touch and let us know what is going on in your Team, Sector and Region. We encourage all our members to send in their reflections, items of interest, and to share their creative gifts with us. It keeps everyone connected and makes the website more alive and interesting. So far we have recipes, poetry and photos. We know that many of our members have a creative side, and enjoy hobbies and pastimes, (gardening, handcrafts, fishing, golf, bowls, dance, theatre....and more) that they are passionate about, and short articles would be of great interest in our social pages. If you have devotional items that you would like to contribute these are very welcome.

We would like to bring to your attention some regularly used parts of the website.

Firstly, we have introduced a **Prayer Space** <https://teamsgb.org.uk/documents/mixed-teams-2> where you can find the Gospel of the Day, the Magnificat and a Prayer to the Holy Spirit. Why not save that page to the home screen on your smart phone or device for easy access and to help with your daily prayer?

The **Readings and Prayers** for the current month are easily accessible in <https://teamsgb.org.uk/members/newsletter>

There is a **News** page <https://teamsgb.org.uk/news> which is frequently updated with a wide variety of items of interest.

We also have pages for **GB Events, Regional Events, and Sector Events** to promote and reflect on all our activities and developments. This could include gatherings, meetings, piloting, celebrations, masses, picnics, retreats, anniversaries and of course any fund-raising that members are doing for Teams. You can send in articles, photos and/or videos, either via your Regional Couples, or directly with supporting information via email: webeditors@TeamsGB.org.uk

We look forward to future collaborations with you all.

Peter Wordsworth and Katie McRae

Web Editors

Beatitudes & Action

Extract from Fr Richard Rohr's daily meditation for 21/7/21:

Knowing Aramaic, the language of Jesus, has greatly enriched my understanding of Jesus' teaching. Because the Bible as we know it is a translation of a translation, we sometimes get a wrong impression. For example, we are accustomed to hearing the Beatitudes expressed passively:

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

"Blessed" is the translation of the word makarioi, used in the Greek New Testament. However, when I look further back to Jesus' Aramaic, I find that the original word was ashray, from the verb yashar. Ashray does not have this passive quality to it at all. Instead, it means "to set yourself on the right way for the right goal; to turn around, repent." . . .

How could I go to a persecuted young man in a Palestinian refugee camp, for instance, and say, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted," or "Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"? That man would revile me, saying neither I nor my God understood his plight and he would be right.

When I understand Jesus' words in Aramaic, I translate like this:

Get up, go ahead, do something, move, you who are hungry and thirsty for justice, for you shall be satisfied.

Get up, go ahead, do something, move, you peacemakers, for you shall be called children of God.

To me this reflects Jesus' words and teachings much more accurately. I can hear him saying: "Get your hands dirty to build a human society for human beings; otherwise, others will torture and murder the poor, the voiceless, and the powerless." Christianity is not passive but active, energetic, alive, going beyond despair. . . .

"Get up, go ahead, do something, move," Jesus said to his disciples. [1]

Megan McKenna concludes: The beatitudes mean deeper mercy for those who experience more divisive misery, deeper blessings for those whose hope is dimmest. They give an ultimate authority to certain people and their plight in the world. They signify not just a religious attitude, but a social attitude toward realities that should not exist among humans.

Submitted by **Angela Helm**

Newcastle 3 Team

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To sign up for Richard Rohr's daily meditations visit <https://cac.org/email-sign-up/>

Amoris Laetitia & The Endeavours

Teams of Our Lady gives us the means, or the tools, to strengthen and nourish us as a couple: the Endeavours. These are not obligations to be followed to the letter because they are in the Charter; rather, experience shows that they are tools that strengthen and cultivate love in the couple and make them happy. Amoris Laetitia encourages us to practice them, whether we name them explicitly or not.

- ◆ **The Sit Down:** "Take time, quality time. This means being ready to listen patiently and attentively to everything the other person wants to say. It requires the self-discipline of not speaking until the time is right. Instead of offering an opinion or advice, we need to be sure that we have heard everything the other person has to say." (AL137)
- ◆ **Family Prayer:** "It also means encouraging family prayer during the week, since 'the family that prays together stays together'." (AL227) "Family prayer is a special way of expressing and strengthening this Paschal faith. A few minutes can be found each day to come together before the living God, to tell him our worries, to ask for the needs of our family, to pray for someone experiencing difficulty, to ask for help in showing love, to give thanks for life and for its blessings, and to ask Our Lady to protect us beneath her maternal mantle." (AL318)
- ◆ **Personal Prayer:** "It is also helpful to encourage each of the spouses to find time for prayer alone with God, since each has his or her secret crosses to bear." (AL227)
- ◆ **Listening to the Word of God:** "All pastoral work on behalf of the family must allow people to be interiorly fashioned and formed as members of the domestic church through the Church's prayerful reading of sacred Scripture." (AL227)
- ◆ **Retreat and Team Meeting:** "Parishes, movements, schools and other Church institutions can help in a variety of ways to support families and help them grow. These might include meetings of couples living in the same neighbourhood, brief retreats for couples; . . . There is also the contribution made by groups of married couples that provide assistance as part of their commitment to service, prayer, formation, and mutual support. Such groups enable couples to be generous, to assist other families and to share the faith; at the same time, they strengthen marriages and help them to grow." (AL229)

Submitted by **Annette & Paul O'Beirne**
Transatlantic Superregional Couple

More information on endeavours is available on the teams website www.teamsgb.org.uk.

8 steps to Deeper Couple Prayer

1. Light a candle and hold hands together for a few minutes. Silently thank God for your spouse.
2. Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together.
3. Before praying together, each offer an intention for your prayer, perhaps something about which you are worried or stressed.
4. Before praying together, share when you felt or recognised God's presence today.
5. Before praying together, share how you felt loved by your spouse today.
6. When praying together, add a prayer of thanks for the gift of your spouse.
7. When praying together, add a prayer of sorrow for the times you failed to love this day.
8. Then praying together, add a prayer asking for a grace you might need, like self-control, perseverance, kindness, humility etc.



"The greatest marriages
are built on teamwork... a
mutual respect, a healthy
dose of admiration and a
never ending portion of
love and grace"

Fawn Weaver

A prayer in Adversity

Loving Creator,

We asked for strength, and you gave us difficulties to make us strong.

We asked for wisdom, and you gave us problems to solve.

We asked for prosperity, and you gave us purpose and brains to use.

We asked for courage, and you gave us fears to overcome.

We asked for patience, and you gave us situations where we were forced to wait.

We asked for love, and you gave us troubled people to help.

We asked for justice, and you called us to be just and lead with integrity.

Lord, we have received nothing that we asked for or wanted.

And yet, we receive everything that we needed.

For this we give thanks.

By Colleen Hanycz, PhD incoming President at Xavier University

<https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/coronavirus-prayers>

Submitted by Fr John Buchard, Formby Team



Getting Together

The Formby Team had a very welcome get-together for afternoon tea in August. Although we had been meeting virtually over the past 18 months this was our first “in person” meeting since September 2020.

It was a real joy to see each other in the flesh and to spend a bit more time catching up with each other. We were blessed with children and grandchildren taking part in the celebration. We have learned throughout this pandemic, enjoying simple pleasures that we might have previously taken for granted. We look forward to seeing more of you in the coming year.

Mark and Dympna Edwards

Formby Team.

Send us any photos of your team or sector for the next newsletter



A prayer for when this is over...

*When this is over,
may we never again take for granted
A handshake with a stranger;
Full shelves at the shop;
Conversations with neighbours;
A crowded theatre;
Friday night out;
The taste of communion;
A routine checkup;
The school rush each morning;
Coffee with a friend;
The stadium roaring;
Each deep breath;
A boring Tuesday;
Life itself.*

*When this ends,
may we find
that we have become
more like the people
we wanted to be,
we were called to be,
we hoped to be,
and may we stay that way--
better for each other
because of the worst.*

*Laura Kelley Fanucci
Xaviour University, Cincinnati*

Fr Caffarel- 25th Anniversary

Newsletter

N°6 – July 2021

Les Amis du Père Caffarel



A NOVENA FOR THE 25th ANNIVERSARY OF FATHER HENRI CAFFAREL'S DEATH

Dear Friends,

When he was twenty, in March 1923, Father Henri Caffarel was seized by the love of Christ and after that moment, he had only one wish: to help others experience that God is love, that Christ is alive. One day Father Caffarel cried out, 'But love is what I am made of!'



On September 18th, 2021, we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of his death with a novena of prayers. This novena has no goal other than that everyone discovers the love God has for them, because life means being loved by God and responding to this love.

For the good of the Church and of all people of good will, we ask for Father Caffarel's canonisation. We cannot keep such richness, the richness of his thinking, his writings, his works. We want couples to have the joy of living better because of God's love and for them to bear witness to it in the world, and we want all Christians discover the richness and treasure of the contemplative prayer.

This is the reason for this novena. Father Caffarel is alive. By listening to his voice and reading his writings that are extraordinarily luminous, we must find the joy to follow Christ, each person according to their vocation. Let us pray, in communion with each other, for the

advancement of this cause and ask for Father Caffarel's intercession for the intentions that we bear in our hearts.

Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits o.p
Editor of the Cause of Father Henri Caffarel

Prayer for the canonisation of Father Caffarel



God, our Father,
You planted deep in the heart of your servant,
Henri Caffarel, a fountain of love which bound
him totally to your Son and inspired him with a
wonderful capacity to speak of Him.

A prophet of our time,
he revealed the dignity and beauty of the
vocation of every person In the words Jesus
addresses to each of us. "Come follow me "

He made couples enthusiastic about the greatness of the sacrament of marriage,
the sign of Christ's fruitful love for the Church and of His union with her.
He showed that priest and couples are called to live a vocation of love.
He was a guide to widows: love is stronger than death.
Prompted by the Holy Spirit,
he accompanied many Christians on the path of prayer.
Seized by a devouring fire, he was a dwelling place for you, Lord

God, our Father,
through the intercession of Our Lady,
we ask you to hasten the day
when the Church will proclaim the holiness of his life,
so that people everywhere will discover the joy of following your Son
In accordance with their particular vocations in the Holy Spirit.
God our Father, we invoke the intercession of Father Caffarel for
(include the particular intercession being sought)

Intercessions

*The latest intercessor newsletter asks for
prayers for people affected by Covid in India
as well as the COP 26 in Glasgow.*

*To receive the newsletter contact
Pat and Tony Banks on
Intercessors@TeamsGB.org.uk*



The Theology of Christian Hospitality

The Theology of Christian Hospitality Henri Caffarel

Extracts from The Golden Ring, Marriage, that great Sacrament. Special edition, 111-112, May-August 1963, pages 280-287)

A Relay on the Road

The Christian home has a specific vocation—hospitality. A Christian home is a relay on the road to the great Church. It is a 'sacrament' of the Church and such a human sacrament: 'the smiling and soft face of the Church,' as one Teams couple put it.

The Christian home is a sermon without words, and yet astonishingly persuasive. No need even to speak the same language. A man and woman who love each other, a child's smile, peace in the home, they are all part of an international language. Christian marriage, according to what theology teaches, is the mirror image of the intimacy that exists between Christ and the Church. Something of this divine reality filters down through the man and woman's love and deposits in their heart something like a mysterious calling.

In order to define an apostolic mission of such importance, a big word is necessary: the home plays the role of 'mediation' between the Church and the world. As mediator, it is the means and the place where God meets men. I am referring to the Christian home, the home of good will, where guests see people who know how to forgive each other, who realize that they are sinners and who, at the same time, are sure of their God's mercy. In such a home, there is no need to dazzle the guest and the family is true to itself in the guest's presence. Isn't this the great law of Christian testimonials? The idea is to practise this ministry of hospitality, as a delegate of the Christian community.

"Compete with the Church," as St John Chrysostom advised his faithful.

Simplicity, Truth, Joy, Love

It is important to reflect upon the art of welcoming in a Christian home, but I will just enumerate the following qualities of Christian hospitality: simplicity, truth, joy and love. Simplicity is what helps the guest realise and understand that they are not a stranger, but a friend and brother. Joy: "the home must be a place of discreet joy," according to one couple and it must also "be a place of love, because this is the only way for people to long for it," according to another.

I was a Stranger...



"The focus of
entertaining
is impressing others;
the focus of
true hospitality
is serving others"

Tim Chester,
A Meal With Jesus

The originality of Christian hospitality resides not only in what is done for the guest, but also in the way in which they are considered. By honouring and serving the guest, the Christian home honours and serves Christ himself. The guest becomes a 'sacrament' through which God transmits his grace to the Christian home. Jesus Christ never ceased to come amongst his own. What does hospitality reveal to us about the divine world?

Submitted by Paul & Annette O Beirne

Transatlantic Superregional Couple.

A little history- first UK regional couple



NOTRE-DAME

PARIS, 3rd December 1975

Mr & Mrs PRATT
18, Brunswick Road
SHIPBORO (Northumberland)

DET/GW

In 1975 Jim and Maria Platt became the first regional couple in the UK.

We thank God for the service of all the regional couples and everyone who has served us in the Teams movement over many years.

Thanks to Tom and Maureen Hoban for sending in excerpts of the letter of appointment opposite.

Dear Jim and Theresa,

Alleluia, Magnificat, Rejoice and all that... you can imagine how pleased we were to hear from Jean and Chantal that you have accepted to become the first Regional Couple. In fact we were all so pleased that we immediately got together and drank vodka to celebrate the occasion only because we did not have any Yorkshire beer handy.

We are very happy to congratulate you on behalf of the Leading Team for setting up the first region in the British Isles and for being the first regional couple. Your region will cover the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, namely the following sectors: Tyne-side, South of England and Dublin just set up (as per copy letter to Daise enclosed) and, we hope, many more in the future.

Jean and Chantal will write to tell you about the role of the Regional Couple but we would like to give you some thoughts which we have compiled from various sources in the Movement.

Your Region covers a large number of dioceses, a growing number of teams and sectors and yours will be the responsibility of coordinating the development and growth not only in numbers but also on a spiritual level. You are the leaders of a community of teams and should therefore watch that the community spirit and brotherly love are kept alive and growing between all the teams. Christ says in St Matthew 18-20: "For where two or three meet in my name I shall be there with them" and Father Caffarel always insists on the three words "in my name" because if we want Christ to be with us it is not sufficient to meet for any purpose, how good it may be, but we have to meet for Christ, for the love of Christ and to seek Christ.

The holy spirit will also manifest himself through Jean and Chantal Cassin who, becoming Super Regional Couple for all English speaking teams will be always ready to help you exchange ideas and convey experiences made in other regions. But to be able to help you they will necessarily have to be kept in the picture and the easiest way might perhaps be for you to send them copies of the more significant reports and correspondence you may have from your sectors together with your replies. This will avoid your having to write separate letters. Jean and Chantal being Super Regional Couple will be the link between you and the poor people in the Leading Team.

Please forgive this long message. We only hope it may give you a little help in your new responsibility and you can be sure that we shall remember you and all your teams in our prayers each day.

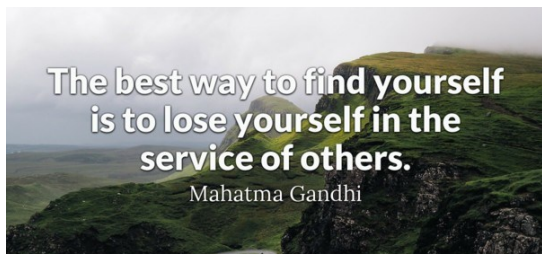
Hoping that some occasion of meeting you will arise soon and wishing you every blessing for the New Year.

Yours affectionately in Christ

For the LEADING TEAM

Daniel

Magdeleine and Daniel FLACH



October Study topic

Meeting 1 - The Beauty of Creation

Objectives - Challenges and Attitudes

- ◆ **Contemplate** nature as a gift and reflection of God and **praise** the Lord
- ◆ **Be aware of** the common purpose to which all beings in the Universe contribute
- ◆ **Proclaim** the primacy of the human being **by respecting and defending the** dignity of each and every species in the hierarchy of Creation.

Introduction

"In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the word "creation" has a broader meaning than "nature", for it has to do with God's loving plan in which every creature has its own value and significance. Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion." (Laudato Si LS, 76) In other words, we and all the beings of the universe are created by the same Father, we are united, and we form a kind of universal family, which impels us to a sacred, loving and humble respect." (LS, 77)

We are asked to contemplate creation, to let ourselves be enveloped by its beauty and to give way in wonder, seeing in it the very presence of God. "When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them." (LS, 87)

Prayer and meditation of the Word

During the month and based on the biblical text, it is proposed that each person and the couple follow the four stages of Reading the Word of God (Lectio Divina) - reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation. - read Acts 17:24-28 on page 18.

Supporting texts

We must recognise the specific value of the human being as a child of God, created in His image and likeness, and his capacities of knowledge, will, freedom, and responsibility. We cannot understand our relationship to the natural world without understanding our relationship to mankind. The notion of having been created in the image of God gives the human being the condition of co-creator. To be able to express oneself and to develop complicated reasoning; to evaluate situations, compare alternatives and make decisions, to think logically and rationally; to aspire to make progress and to innovate. The relationship of the human being with what surrounds him/her is itself a consequence of the processes of perception and representation, and these are constantly changing as we grow.

"Each of us has a personal identity and is capable of entering into dialogue with others and with God himself. Our capacity to reason, to develop arguments, to be inventive, to interpret reality and to create art, along with other not yet discovered capacities, are signs of a uniqueness which transcends the spheres of physics and biology." (LS, 81)

"And God saw all that he had made; and behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). God, Himself, revels in the wonder of His work. "The glory of God is the living Man," says Saint Irenaeus of Lyon.

But the fact that human beings were created by God does not make them complete. Father Caffarel writes: "The human person arrives at a state where, in order to reach fullness, it is necessary to enter into communion with God. God is no longer a notion, He is no longer a being we hear about, but Someone we meet and with whom a dialogue is established, an intimacy (...) which does not derive solely from the fact of having understood that the feeling of loneliness of adolescence was an aspiration for conjugal communion, but also from having been led by it to the desire for another communion, another marriage, that of the soul with its God" (The Golden Ring, no. 101). The human being completes himself by making two commitments. The first gives priority to God, who must occupy the first place in everything. The other is established in one's conjugal relationship, in life in society and interpersonal dialogue and in one's relation to the world created by God.

In such a relationship with the world, we must recognise that the value of the human person is the basis for recognising the other as an equal, with their own dignity, however fragile their life may be. So, if we either negate the specific value of the human being in the whole of creation or if we overly "divinise the earth" this causes an imbalance that is beneath us as children of God. A more holistic view must include a relationship with the environment but also needs to include both the social dimension of human beings and the transcendent dimension of their openness to God. Everything is interconnected.

Moreover, creation comes out of love. The love of God is the fundamental reason for all creation: *"For you love all things that exist and detest none of the things that you have made, for you would not have made anything if you had hated it."* (Wis 11:24).

"Every creature is thus the object of the Father's tenderness, which gives it its place in the world. Even the fleeting life of the least of beings is the object of his love, and in its few seconds of existence God enfolds it with his affection."(LS, 77) We collaborate with God in caring for the fragility of nature and this requires us to care responsibly for the world in which we live. We must care for the environment and commit ourselves to others and to society. However, in many situations we act as absolute masters of the earth, forgetting that we are only caretakers of a world created by God. At other times we act irresponsibly with indifference or cruelty towards other creatures, especially other human beings. Everything is interconnected.



"The vision of the Creator is a creative vision. To look upon and to create is one and the same act of God. God's gaze is not that of a spectator. He does not gaze at a being that already exists, but he introduces and brings that being into existence. God's gaze "conceives" a man, a unique saint, and behold that man exists." (Henri Caffarel in *L'Amour et la Grace*, page 13).

Text by Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson

Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson*, in his presentation at the International Gathering of Fatima 2018, affirmed that families can embody "a true example of human dignity" and "morality" and in this way be a model for the entire human family; called to live in and to care for our common home and all of creation. In his presentation on conjugal spirituality, as part of a broader "human ecology" that is based on "fraternity" and "communion," he explained that whoever has a home to administer understands well what it means to have "responsibility for our common home." Those who live in a small community such as the family community, where we manage relationships, problems, compromises, projects, know well the importance of proper interaction among people.

For this reason, Cardinal Turkson asked the families present to live day by day—in the reality of the small and large choices they have to make—the close relationship that unites human dignity to the protection of the environment and unites mankind to creation in its entirety. It is a question, he explained, of an "ecological conscience" that surpasses the consciousness that the international community has achieved over the last fifty years, even with the evolution of scientific studies and the political measures of various governments and the United Nations. It is a consciousness that has its roots in the Holy Scriptures, in the biblical narrative of creation where God puts man, "made of the dust of the earth and the breath of God" in the "garden that He planted" for man to cultivate. Therefore, being in charge means to care and protect.

From this point of view, man is no longer "the self-referential centre of creation"; although he carries within him the distinction of being in the image and likeness of God, he is perceived above all as "part of a created, interconnected and interdependent world". But not only that: "Man is a member of a community, he is in communion with others and lives in a network of relationships". Above all, it is in their common nature as children of God that men recognise themselves as "equal in dignity". This is why "every homicide is a fratricide". The human being "is not an individual. He is a relational being, created to coexist in the relationship of a family, a community, a society, with the same dignity and seeking the common good". The human person is created for a life of communion, he also affirmed. All this explains the meaning of the expression "human ecology": "It is not only man's interaction with his environment, but the conditions of goodness, order, justice, love, fraternity, solidarity and mercy that make human life flourish as God's creation" (*L'Osservatore Romano* 21/07/2018).

Testimonials

The beauty with which God looked upon the world when He created it [Gen 1:1-31] is the same beauty that we are invited to when we look at the world. It is with the same loving gaze of God that, as a Christian couple, we look at creation to find in it the Lord of all things, the Lord of our lives. Men and women created by God, out of love and for love, masterpieces of Creation—we are co-creators, at the service of Creation, responsible for Creation, so that it

* Prefect of the Dicastery for the Service of Integral Human Development

may continue to be beautiful, the same beauty dreamed of by God when he created it, so that Creation may be a community of love as God intended it to be. It is good to learn again, through prayer and meditation, to contemplate and to let ourselves be filled with wonder at dawn, by the timid piercing of the sun's rays through the clouds, as we drive towards work and perceive that sweet caress of the Lord at the beginning of a new day. The song of the little birds, which like a harmonious orchestra fills our days with joy. A late afternoon, when we let ourselves be intoxicated by the scent of the sea and praise the Lord to the sound of the waves... on this island in the middle of the sea! So many moments of praise, in harmony with the different forms of expression of nature, the work of His creation!

We have understood that our well-being is interrelated with the well-being of creation. We welcome this new opportunity to take care of our common home.

Together we pray for Creation and give thanks to the Creator. We ask for inspiration so that, through small, simple, and solid gestures, we can find the courage to live as God wants us to live but in communion with the rest of creation.

[Sonia and Vitor]

My testimony as a priest and spiritual counsellor is first and foremost a testimony of gratitude. For me, the Teams of Our Lady are that space where we live the beauty of creation because we recognise the central place that the family occupies in the society in which we live. Each couple with their children bears witness to God's plan; prayer, encounter and the path to holiness are present in every meeting and at every encounter. In the conversations during the meeting, it is real life that is important; the problems and joys that couples experience help them to live in the real world and to let their lives be one continuous prayer.

In Teams of Our Lady the meeting and sharing are essential for the journey that we make together; even in the situation that we have recently experienced we have continued to be present in each other's lives. Sometimes we need to stop to understand how God manifests Himself in our lives and how our gaze needs hope to see the beauty that continues to emerge in the small events of each day, even when things do not go the way we wanted them to go, that seemed better or fairer to us; we see God acting through those He puts in our lives. In Teams of Our Lady, we are disciples of Jesus with the help and presence of Mary, whose beauty inspires us. Her life is a model for couples who try to imitate the deeds and attitudes of the Virgin Mary, the first disciple, through whom we understand God's plan.

The beauty of creation is not an abstract thought, it is a path that we take, in fidelity to God's plan, where the central place that humanity occupies does not separate us from the world created by God, but rather holds us responsible for safeguarding the work created by God. The choice that the Teams have made throughout this year is to examine in a particular way the Encyclical *Laudato Si*, which arises from the whole social doctrine of the Church and is also completed in *Fratelli Tutti*. The encyclicals encourage us to look at our neighbour as brother and sister and to discover the world around us as a place of communion, where, through creation, we discover and contemplate the Creator. I pray that during this year every couple and every family will be surprised by the beauty of creation and that the Gospel proclaimed and lived will transform the world and life according to God's will.

[Father Valter]

- ◆ Before the Team meeting discuss the questions on page 19 as a couple .

October Team Meeting

Meeting 1 - The Beauty of Creation

Reading of the Word of God and Meditation [Acts 17:24-28].

The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; (Acts 17:24-28)

Liturgical Prayer - [PS 8, 4-10]

O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honour.
You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.



Sharing on Endeavours

This meeting we give priority to **Personal Prayer**, which leads us to intimacy with the Creator and with Creation, the work of His hands.

Sharing Reflections on the Study Topic

Based on the challenges and attitudes proposed for this month we suggest that each couple prepare the study topic based on these questions below. The important thing is to focus on the reality and not the theory.

- ◆ How do we look at Creation? Do we welcome it as a reflection and gift from God or do we use it only as a benefit that we have at our disposal? Reflect on our daily attitudes.
- ◆ Has the enforced standstill that humanity has experienced during the coronavirus pandemic changed my/our relationship with the creation that God has prepared for me/us?
- ◆ In these times when the place and dignity of the human being in creation seems to have been weakened, how do I proclaim daily the values of the Gospel in relation to ecology?

Final Prayer

This is the time when the team members pray for their intentions and for everything that has come into their hearts during the meeting. To begin the final prayer of this meeting we call upon a deeply Catholic Portuguese writer, Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen.

"I call You because everything is still in the beginning.
And to endure is the longest of times
I beg You to come and give me freedom,
May one of Your glances purify me and finish me.
There are a lot of things I do not want to see.
I ask You to be the present.
I ask You to flood everything.
And may Thy kingdom before time come
And be spread over the Earth
Like a ferocious Spring in a hurry."

Suggestions for the month ahead

Yet we are called to be instruments of God our Father, so that our planet might be what he desired when he created it and correspond with his plan for peace, beauty and fullness. LS, 53]

- ◆ Read the first chapter of the Encyclical Letter Laudato Si [LS, 17-61].
- ◆ Share as a couple, during conjugal prayer, on how you see God's dream for your family and how you can be, every day, instruments of God the Father in the realisation of this dream.

November Study Topic

Meeting 2 - The Family in God's Design

Objectives - Challenges and Attitudes

- ◆ Fight against individualism and a culture centred on “the me”
- ◆ Care for those excluded by assisting them and helping them integrate into society.
- ◆ Adopt behaviours that lead to harmony in the family in different contexts (school environment, work family life balance, parish community)
- ◆ Live the Family as the Sanctuary of Life
- ◆ Be present in situations where human dignity and the vulnerability of life are being questioned.

Introduction

Human beings reach their fullness when they are connected to God and the world around them. And both are indispensable. Pope Francis warns us, in *Laudato Si*, against a crisis of excessive and obsessive individualism, when he states that "If the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships." *Laudato Si*, 119].

Human ecology means recreating a world where we can all reach the fullness of life. And it means creating a dignified environment for all people, that is, one that excludes no one, and at the same time, one that is dignified for humanity in all its dimensions, fully respecting its own nature.

Prayer and Meditation of the Word

During the month and based on the biblical text, the couple follow the four stages of Prayerful Reading (Lectio Divina) - reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation.

My beloved speaks and says to me:

“Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away:

for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.

*The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.*

My beloved is mine and I am his, he pastures his flock among the lilies.

Until the day breathes and the shadows flee,.....

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm;

for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave.

Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most vehement flame.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.

If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned.

Song of Solomon 2:10

Supporting texts

"Christian thought sees human beings as possessing a particular dignity above other creatures; it thus inculcates esteem for each person and respect for others. Our openness to others, each of whom is a "thou" capable of knowing, loving and entering into dialogue, remains the source of our nobility as human persons. A correct relationship with the created world demands that we not weaken this social dimension of openness to others, much less the transcendent dimension of our openness to the "Thou" of God. Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God. Otherwise, it would be nothing more than romantic individualism dressed up in ecological garb, locking us into a stifling immanence." (LS, 119)

"In this dimension of relationships with others, the conjugal union assumes particular relevance, "alone", man does not completely realize this essence. He realizes it only by existing "with someone" - and even more deeply and completely - by existing "for someone.The communion of persons means existing in a mutual "for", in a relationship of mutual gift." ([Saint John Paul II, January 9, 1980](#)). The Catechism of the Catholic Church 2203 tells us "In creating man and woman, God instituted the human family and endowed it with its fundamental constitution. Its members are persons equal in dignity. For the common good of its members and of society, the family implies a diversity of responsibilities, rights and duties".

In the pastoral challenges of the Synod of Bishops "The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World"(2015), Pope Francis further emphasises that true love between husband and wife, conjugal love, is rooted in Christ: Jesus Christ the Lord "comes to meet Christian spouses in the sacrament of marriage" (GS, 48), and dwells in them. Through the Incarnation, He takes human love upon Himself, purifies it and leads it to fullness, and through His Spirit He gives the spouses the capacity to live this love, infusing their whole life with faith, hope and charity. Thus, marriage involves more than a simple re-ordering of individual experiences, but a mutual gift mirrored in Christ.

"Your home will be an even more explicit witness to God if it represents the union of two seekers of God in the wonderful expression of the Psalms. Two seekers whose minds and hearts are eager to know and meet God, impatient to be united with Him, who have understood that God is the great reality, that God interests them more than anything else." (Fr. Henri Caffarel, Conference "The Teams of Our Lady facing atheism", Rome, 1970).

The marital relationship has a central role here, as God intended. He created us man and woman so that, united in one flesh, we would love each other and build each other up through this life-giving love. By divine mandate, the couple cannot keep the graces of married life for themselves. Fr. Henri Caffarel affirmed that "no couple has the right to live an unfruitful existence." Man and woman, the couple is called to cooperate and to watch together over the work of the Creator. However, if they break one of these commitments, human beings distort their very condition. Without God, they break their ties to others and to nature, to the point of destroying themselves. By isolating themselves and not respecting the world, they ruin the plan of divine nature.

We can go further in this characterisation and identification of the reality of the family that St. John Paul II called the "Sanctuary of Life" and [add] that Pope Francis reminds us that " the role of the family in building a culture of life is decisive and irreplaceable. " (EV, 92).

"It is necessary to go back to seeing the family as the *sanctuary of life*. The family is indeed

sacred: it is the place in which life — the gift of God — can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth. In the face of the so-called culture of death, the family is the heart of the culture of life. (CA, 39)

In fact, "the first and fundamental structure for "human ecology" is the family, in which human beings receive their first formative ideas about truth and goodness and learn what it means to love and to be loved, and thus what it actually means to be a person. Here we mean the *family founded on marriage*, in which the mutual gift of self by husband and wife creates an environment in which children can be born and develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny." (CA, 39)

In the same sense, Pope Francis alerts us to the need for coherence in our attitudes, giving as an example: "Since everything is interrelated, concern for the protection of nature is also incompatible with the justification of abortion. How can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings, however troublesome or inconvenient they may be, if we fail to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties? "If personal and social sensitivity towards the acceptance of the new life is lost, then other forms of acceptance that are valuable for society also wither away". (LS, 120)

A point to recognise is that our body puts us in direct relationship with the environment and other living beings, signifying respect for life and human dignity. The acceptance of the body as a gift from God is necessary for us to welcome and accept the whole world and common home as a gift from the Father; on the other hand, a logic of domination over one's body is transformed into a, sometimes subtle, logic of domination over creation. Learning to accept one's body, to care for it, to appreciate it as feminine or masculine, respecting its value is essential for a true human ecology.

Finally, it is true that society in general must create conditions that allow for harmony between the different contexts in which family life takes place, especially work and family life, which also allow for the care of those excluded from society; but it is also the mission of families to be active in the renewal of our society.

Text by Cardinal D. Tolentino of Mendonça

"We know the semantics of proximity and distance, and, in fact, we need both. These are elements of proven importance in the architecture of what we are: without either, we would not exist. Without the primordial proximity we would not even be generated. But without separation and progressive distancing our existence would not take place.

In the allegorical language of the book of Genesis, God created man by kneading him out of the clay of the earth and offering him his own breath, but then He left the human couple alone in the garden so that the adventure of freedom could begin. In the same way, each one of us has been called to build his internal world in the balance of these two words: fusion and distinction. And through them we discover, by trial and error, the meaning of love, trust, care, creation and desire. It is true that in the personal and social field there are distances that are roundabout ways of putting up barriers, of inoculating the community body with the ideological virus of inequality, of introducing all kinds of inequalities into our common existence (economic, political, cultural, etc.).

And we must also recognise that so many forms of proximity are nothing more than abuses of power over others, corrupt ways of exercising power, as if others were our property. So, distance and proximity need to be purified." (Card. José Tolentino Mendonça, In Expresso, 22.03.2020)

Testimonials

We got married in 2016 and ten months later our first son was born. At that time, we were both at the beginning of our careers, as is the case with so many young couples. Although very different,

our jobs were demanding in terms of schedules - one was finishing medical school and had internships and nights to do, and the other worked as a consultant with open ended hours. The birth of our first son, and then our second, changed our priorities and, in the light of God's grace, we realised that we both had to give up some personal interests, including some professional choices.

We both decided to make changes - we gave up a career as a doctor abroad and a career as consultant to have more time for each other, with our children and also to maintain close contact with our families and friends who form the environment where we believe we can best raise our children - who today number three. We continue to lead a busy and full life, like so many couples, but we are at peace with the decision we have made, because we made it together and brought it to our personal and conjugal prayer.

[Diana and José Miguel]

As Father João Seabra said, Catholic families have exactly the same problems as other families. A Catholic marriage does not remove the problems. But a Catholic marriage brings us two important pieces of news: the union is for life and throughout our life we count on the graces of the Sacrament of Marriage. And since we do not want to live all our lives with the same problems, we put an enormous effort into resolving them, and we focus on the path and not on the imperfections of the couple and the family.

The main and first service to which we feel called is: in our family's everyday life to encourage our children to listen, to understand, to be resilient, to be persistent, to dialogue, to welcome, to be humble, to share, to forgive, to put the other first, that is to say, to Love. We have discovered that from this effort, from this service, joy, harmony, and happiness are born. It is true that it is often very difficult, but it is also true that more often it is very rewarding! Yes, it is worth not giving up!

We humbly end up discovering that the greatest force to make all this happen does not come from us. In this way we discover the power of prayer. This very Love that unites us, impels us to go beyond the family and to go out on mission: throughout our 28 years of marriage, we have accompanied youth teams, we have piloted other teams, we have been catechists in our parish, we have been Responsible couples, at this time we are responsible for Family Ministry. But the basis is always the solidity of our family which we cannot neglect: each one of us, both of us as a couple, our seven children. That is how we build peace, that is how we contribute to the common good, to our common home. Big things become solid when they are built on the solidity of small things.

[Regiani and Tiago]

November Team Meeting

Reading of the Word of God and meditation *Song of Solomon 2, 10-12, 17; Cor 8, 6-7*

My beloved spoke and said to me,

“Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me.

See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone.

Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come,
the cooing of doves is heard in our land.

Until the day breaks and the shadows flee,
turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle
or like a young stag on the rugged hills.

Place me like a seal over your heart,
like a seal on your arm;
for love is as strong as death,
its jealousy unyielding as the grave.
It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame.

Many waters cannot quench love;
rivers cannot sweep it away.

If one were to give all the wealth of one's house for love, it would be utterly scorned.



Liturgical Prayer - [Ps 44 (45), 3:8-12; 17:18].

My heart overflows with a goodly theme; I address my verses to the king;

You are the most handsome of men;
grace is poured upon your lips;
therefore God has blessed you for ever.

You love righteousness and hate wickedness.
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;
your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia.
From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad;
daughters of kings are among your ladies of honour;
at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.

Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear;
forget your people and your father's house,
and the king will desire your beauty.
Since he is your lord, bow to him;

In the place of ancestors you, O king, shall have sons ;
you will make them princes in all the earth.
I will cause your name to be celebrated in all generations;
therefore the peoples will praise you for ever and ever.

Sharing on the Endeavours

Sharing on our experience of the Endeavours is a special time of mutual spiritual support during the team meeting. It is a time to check out our progress on the path to conjugal and individual holiness. In this meeting the focus is on **Conjugal Prayer**, which is the means par excellence to let the Spirit of the Father who loves us enter into our family, social and religious way of life.

QUESTIONS FOR THE TEAM MEETING

(Exchange of ideas on the Study Topic)

Based on the challenges and attitudes proposed at the beginning of this meeting, it is suggested that the couple prepare the study topic based on the following questions:

- ◆ What aspects are closest to God's plan in our family? And which ones are further away?
- ◆ To what extent do we care for harmony in our marital, family and professional relationships? Do we realise the importance of kindness, respect, gentle affirmation of opinions, etc. in all areas of our lives?
- ◆ Have we tried to be attentive and informed about the Church's thinking in relation to sensitive subjects that require us to take clear and bold positions?

Final Prayer

This is the time when the team members pray for their intentions and for everything that came into their hearts during the meeting.

To begin the final prayer of this meeting, we invoke the words of Cardinal D. Tolentino of Mendonça:

"Pray the necessary thing."

When I think of the things You teach us daily, Lord, I often remember the words You addressed to Martha, during one of your meetings in Bethany. You told her: "Only one thing is necessary."

Even in a context as demanding as the one in which we live, where we feel thousands of arms pulling us in different directions, where thousands of voices cry out to us about very real emergencies, where it is easy for the trap of anguish to lock us into a restlessness that deep down only serves to increase impotence and fear, I recall Your advice to Martha: "only one thing is necessary".

Help us, Lord, in this hour, to have the wisdom to ask, "what is the necessary thing?" and to focus our intelligence, our effort and our heart on it.

Help us to discern, with the light of the Holy Spirit, that "unique thing" that at this moment best sums up the unfailing responsibility that we are called to express before You and our brothers and sisters.

And help us, like Our Lady, to have confidence. To trust, as she did, not only in the goals considered possible, but even in those that, in moments of greatest discouragement, doubt or fatigue, we would be tempted to declare impossible.

Prayer for the Canonisation of Fr. Caffarel

(see page 11)



December Study Topic

Meeting 3 - The Dialogue between Faith and Reason

Objectives - Challenges and Attitudes

- ◆ **Reflect on** the reality of the Human Being, made up of body and soul, and find in it the depths of reason and faith.
- ◆ **Think about** how faith should collaborate with reason in order to better understand the extent of the problems facing mankind;
- ◆ **Understand** how faith and reason influence the choices of the couple and family and thus,
- ◆ **Give meaning to** the harmonious evolution of God's work.



Introduction

Faith and religion have often been presented as antagonistic and restricting to science and scientific progress. Indeed, history shows us that faith and reason have sometimes been in conflict. From Ancient Greece to the Enlightenment, various philosophers and scientists have defended the need to verify the truth in order to believe in it, and for the overcoming of unfounded beliefs. The promise of a better future based only on evolution and progress gradually took hold.

However, today this is not entirely true. Mankind dominates nature, but not its passions, its special interests, its thirst for power. Another belief is coming to the fore that promises freedom through work and an alienating dependence on technology. Mankind consciously or unconsciously exploits natural resources in a selfish way, and devastates the world it inhabits, favouring the enrichment of a dominant class.

The balance between faith and science is fundamental for man to adequately relate to himself and to the world around him. *"Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf.Ex.33:18; Psalm 27:8-9; 63:2-3; Jn14:8;1 Jn3:2)".* Fides et Ratio, 1, John Paul II.

Prayer and meditation of the Word

It is suggested that each person and the couple follow the four stages of the Prayerful Reading (Lectio Divina) - reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation during the month and based on the biblical text.

Then the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Then he said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning, and the end. To the thirsty, I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life." Rev 21:5-6

Supporting texts

Pope Francis alerts us to the need to reconcile faith and science for a better evolution of humanity. "I am well aware that, in the areas of politics and philosophy, there are those who firmly reject the idea of a Creator, or consider it irrelevant, and consequently dismiss as irrational the rich contribution

which religions can make towards an integral ecology and the full development of humanity. Others view religions simply as a subculture to be tolerated. Nonetheless, science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both."(LS, 62).

It is necessary to demystify and eliminate preconceptions in the relationship between wisdom and human thought. "Faith goes far beyond reason, but it does not contradict it. I am completely convinced of this, not only in my life, but also in the reality of what religious faith is, and in what human reason can achieve" [George Coyne, North American astronomer and Jesuit]. "The gaze of science thus benefits from faith: faith encourages the scientist to remain constantly open to reality in all its inexhaustible richness. Faith awakens the critical sense by preventing research from being satisfied with its own formulae and helps it to realize that nature is always greater. By stimulating wonder before the profound mystery of creation, faith broadens the horizons of reason to shed greater light on the world which discloses itself to scientific investigation."[LF, 34].

"There is thus no reason for competition of any kind between reason and faith: each contains the other, and each has its own scope for action." Again the Book of Proverbs points in this direction when it exclaims: "It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out" (*Prov.25:2*). In their respective worlds, God and the human being are set within a unique relationship. In God there lies the origin of all things, in him is found the fullness of the mystery, and in this his glory consists; to men and women there falls the task of exploring truth with their reason, and in this their nobility consists. The Psalmist adds one final piece to this mosaic when he says in prayer: "How deep to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I try to count them, they are more than the sand. If I come to the end, I am still with you" (*Psalms 139:17-18*). The desire for knowledge is so great and it works in such a way that the human heart, despite its experience of insurmountable limitation, yearns for the infinite riches which lie beyond, knowing that there is to be found the satisfying answer to every question as yet unanswered." (FR, 17 - St. John Paul II).

"Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth." (Cc. Vatican I: DS 3017). "Consequently, methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God. The humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conservator of all things, who made them what they are." (GS 36, § 2). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 159).

Science and faith share common concerns, the intimate desire to understand the infinite, to reach it, and to understand how man takes part in it. Religion focuses on questions on the origin of the universe and the meaning of life. Science focuses on natural phenomena and seeks to acquire reliable knowledge of the causes and principles of things.

"All human beings desire to know", and truth is the proper object of this desire. Everyday life shows how concerned each of us is to discover for ourselves, beyond mere opinions, how things really are. Within visible creation, man is the only creature who not only is capable of knowing but who knows that he knows, and is therefore interested in the real truth of what he perceives. People cannot be genuinely indifferent to the question of whether what they know is true or not. If they discover that it is false, they reject it; but if they can establish its truth, they feel themselves rewarded. It is this that Saint Augustine teaches when he writes: "I have met many who wanted to deceive, but none

who wanted to be deceived." It is rightly claimed that persons have reached adulthood when they can distinguish independently between truth and falsehood, making up their own minds about the objective reality of things. This is what has driven so many enquiries, especially in the scientific field, which in recent centuries have produced important results, leading to genuine progress for all humanity." (FR, 25, Saint John Paul II).

By moving away from God, man sees only himself, his own greatness, and does not realize his own misery. "Every human gaze is narrow. Only the Spirit offers us the wide angle of history and the key to our existence. Without the light of faith, we will never find the exact place where the Spirit dwells. This is not a theological or pastoral matter. It is the soul of everything, the surpassing of all systems, organisations, movements, technocratic elaborations, highly scientific or academic views. It is the supplement, the presupposition, the creator, the principle and the end of the thought, will and action of every man, believer or atheist, Christian, Jewish or Muslim. It is ecumenical, universal, tolerant, vigorous, clarifying, pacifying. The soul of everything. Even that which seems to have no soul. The day of every night." [Cón. António Rego].

It is necessary for man to detach himself from his arrogance as the owner of truth and from his self-sufficiency so as not to condition his own existence and to make space, in himself, for the work of God, for the continuous and evolving process of reason. As Father Caffarel said, "—your lack of anxiety makes me uneasy. You who are so tranquil in your possession of truth, so comfortably established on the threshold of a virtuous life, is not good enough. Morality is more than that. For morality is not only avoiding evil, or merely doing something, but of doing good, the whole good. As long as there is dissension in the world, and as long as there is a man who suffers, or there is something better to be done, you are not following the law, for each man is responsible for the world. Moreover, you only have to read the Bible, that disquieting little book, to convince yourself of it. Love is life and the biologist tells us—life is tension, movement, ingenuity, tenacity, and irrepressible striving. All that is contrary to quietude. There is no rest for him who loves. But you must understand what love is. To love is to wish the growth of a person, it is to work furiously to that end. It is to give all that you have and all that you are." Fr. Caffarel in *Propos sur l'Amour et la Grâce*]

No one can boast of being in perfect accord with it. "The measure of love is to love without measure." Love is life and the biologist tells us—life is tension, movement, ingenuity, tenacity, and irrepressible striving. All that is contrary to quietude. There is no rest for him who loves. That is why there are so many who seek to hide from love, who fear it and prefer to submit to some code. But you must understand what love is. To love is to wish the growth of a person, it is to work furiously to that end. It is to give all that you have and all that you are. It is to suffer not having riches enough to fill him up without measure.

And he also added, "To be competent is, in fact, to love one's brothers. One who applies his intelligence and strength to discovering the secrets of nature, (...) does he not practice fraternal love? (...) To be competent is also to love God. For God has done men the honour of willing to need their assistance:" Fr. Caffarel in *Propos sur l'Amour et la Grâce*, [Love and Grace in Marriage]

"If we are truly concerned to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out, and that includes religion and the language particular to it. The Catholic Church is open to dialogue with philosophical thought; this has enabled her to produce various syntheses between faith and reason. The development of the Church's social teaching represents such a synthesis with regard to social issues; this teaching is called to be enriched by taking up new challenges." (LS, 63).

Text by Father Luigi Verdi (founder of the Fraternity of Romena)

"Faith does not prevent us from seeing Reason as a tool of God. Reason leads us to communion with transcendence and the universality/diversity of man's gaze upon the universe and its mysteries because Jesus is not closed, he is catholic, that is to say, universal, and we must get used to thinking that light can come from afar, and that we do not possess "truth" exclusively. Everyone has his or her own angle of truth, and instead of fighting against those who have a different faith, we must learn with them. We do not find in Jesus the will to conquer, the desire to impose his will. Therefore, the truth where we can all find ourselves, no matter what our path is, is the merciful goodness of this Father of all, and our authentic search. Jesus,

master of the *impossible*, teaches us to be in communion with those who seek Him and those who do not seek Him, to participate in the faith of all and also in the non-faith of those who, by temperament or formation, do not succeed in joining a faith, but who strive to continue to seek sincerely.

I got used to calling everyone by the name of Jesus, to pronounce it in Aramaic, *Je-sciu-a*, that word that evokes the sound of the wind, that resounds when you are alone and sad, when you have to look at yourself within or in a mirror. It is the only name that speaks of the goodness of the world." [Padre Luigi Verdi, in *La realtà sa di pane*, ed. Romena].

Testimonials

We consider that faith and science are two complementary instruments with diverse methods and epistemologies (theories of knowledge), for the permanent search for Truth.

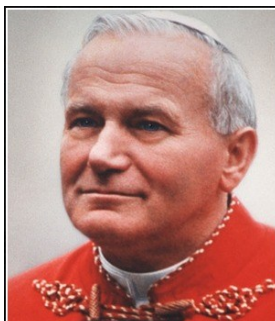
In general, human beings tend to believe more easily in what they see or what science explains! However, faith calls for the acceptance of what it is not physically possible to see (John 20:29: "have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe!") or which is not explainable by science (existence of God, the soul and its immortality, the incarnation and resurrection of Christ...). To believe is an act for which we ask divine help, "Lord, I believe, but increase my faith".

Science in its search for natural truths uses objective processes, the scientific method, and its discoveries are credible once accepted by the scientific community. Each scientific discovery is not a creation from nothing, but rather an advance in the understanding of the complexity, beauty and harmony of nature, discovering new truths that need to be explained. We can see, therefore, that scientific advancement can be considered as a way of arriving at the Truth of God, while being an invaluable aid in the search for supernatural truths about faith.

[Sofia and José Carlos]

During my youth, knowing reality and understanding the laws of mathematics, physics and chemistry was something that bothered me and made me study. At the same time, I have always participated in the life of the Church, but I must admit that at that time I had not yet understood the unity of the person and it seemed to me that science and faith were two separate worlds. They were not in conflict, but they did not connect. It was only later that I began to understand that it is not only a question of being able to have faith and scientific knowledge at the same time. It is not about two worlds. Truth is one. Faith lived is always an experience that requires intelligence to be truly human; and human reason is not closed to what we can define. Reason is the human capacity to open oneself up to reality and to seek meaning of everything. It was fundamental to understand that man is naturally capable of entering into a relationship with God and of welcoming God's Revelation. This explains why faith needs reason and reason opens itself to faith. Faith is, in fact, the knowledge of Revelation and becomes a relationship with God. It is not only a religious feeling, but also the encounter with Jesus Christ who saves us from sin and fully reveals God and his plan for humanity and, because of this, it is a light that helps reason to know the fullness of the Truth.

[Father Duarte]



Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth- in a word, to know himself- so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.

— Pope John Paul II —

December Team Meeting

Reading of the Word of God and meditation [Rev 21:5-6].

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

Liturgical Prayer - [Psalm 48 (49), 4-8]

Hear this, all you peoples, give ear, all inhabitants of the world.

I will incline my ear to a proverb;
I will solve my riddle to the music of the lyre.

Why should I fear in times of trouble,
when the iniquity of my persecutors surrounds me,
men who trust in their wealth
and boast of the abundance of their riches?

Truly no man can ransom himself,
or give to God the price of his life,
for the ransom of his life is costly,
and can never suffice,

Sharing on the Endeavours

Sharing on our experience of the Endeavours is a special time of mutual spiritual support during the team meeting. It is a time to check out our progress on the path of conjugal and individual holiness. In this meeting emphasis will be placed on **Listening to the Word of God**, which is the foundation for a complete understanding of the truth about God's purposes for mankind.

QUESTIONS FOR THE TEAM MEETING

(Exchange of ideas on the Study Topic)

Based on the challenges and attitudes proposed at the beginning of this meeting, it is suggested that the couple prepare the study topic based on the following questions.

- ◆ Do we feel that science and progress have conditioned our faith or are they in conflict with our understanding of worldly things? Is our faith evident in our life choices?
- ◆ Are we aware that as Christians we need to keep up to date with and study Church documents in order to be able to offer others a correct perspective on events?
- ◆ Do we encourage our children to study? How do we guide their choices?
- ◆ Do we fearlessly express our opinions, even if they differ from those of the majority?

Final Prayer

This is the time when the team members pray for their intentions and for everything that came into their hearts during the meeting.

To begin the final prayer of this meeting, we invoke the words of Pope Francis.

*Loving God,
Creator of heaven and earth and all that is in them,
You created us in your own image and made us
stewards of all your creation.
You blessed us with the sun, water and bountiful land
so that all might be nourished.
Open our minds and touch our hearts,
so that we may attend to your gift of creation.
Help us to be conscious that our common home
belongs not only to us,
but to all of your creatures and to all future generations,
and that it is our responsibility to preserve it.
May we help each person secure the food and resources
that they need.
Be present to those in need in these trying times,
especially the poorest and those most at risk of being left behind.
Transform our fear and feelings of isolation into hope
and fraternity so that we may experience
a true conversion of the heart.
Help us to show creative solidarity in addressing
the consequences of this global pandemic,
Make us courageous to embrace the changes
that are needed in search of the common good.
Now more than ever may we feel
that we are all interconnected and interdependent.
Enable us to listen and respond to the cry of the earth
and the cry of the poor.
May the present sufferings be the birth pangs of
a more fraternal and sustainable world.
Under the loving gaze of Mary Help of Christians,
we make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen*

[Pope Francis prayer for the 5th anniversary of the Encyclical Letter Laudato Si]



Last notes...

The Magnificat (Lk 1: 46-56)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
and my spirit exults in God my Saviour,
because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid.

Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed,
for the almighty has done great things for me.
Holy is His name,
and His mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear Him.

He has shown the power of His arm.

He has routed the proud of heart.

He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly.
The hungry He has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away.

He has come to the help of Israel His servant, mindful of His mercy
According to the promise He made to our ancestors
of His mercy to Abraham and to his descendants forever.

Our Lady of the Home, pray for us.

Regional Gatherings 2021

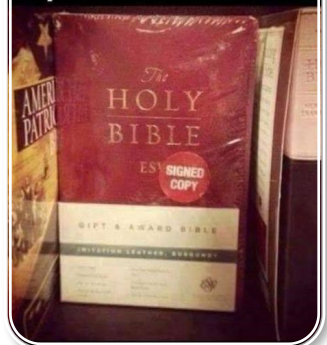
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